1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

hills, and if one met them in the plains one would not be able to distinguish them from the ordinary Kachari or Rabha. The nose in the Khasi is somewhat depressed, the nostrils being often large and prominent. The forehead is broad and the space between the eyes is often considerable. The skull may be said to be almost brachy-cephalic, the average cephalic index of 77 Khasi subjects, measured by Col. Waddell and Major Hare, I.M.S., being as high as 77·3 and 77·9, respectively. According to these data the Khasis are more brachy-cephalic than the Aryans, whose measurements appear in Crooke's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the 100 Mundas whose measurements appear in Risley's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the Dravidians, but less brachy-cephalic than the Burmans, whose measurements also appear in Crooke's tables. It would be interesting to compare some head measurements of Khasis with Japanese, but unfortunately the necessary data are not available in the case of the latter people. The Khasi head may be styled sub-brachy-cephalic. Eyes are of medium size, in colour black or brown. In the Jaintia Hills hazel eyes are not uncommon, especially amongst females. Eyelids are somewhat obliquely set, but not so acutely as in the Chinese and some other Mongols. Jaws frequently are prognathous, mouth large, with sometimes rather thick lips. Hair black, straight, and worn long, the hair of people who adopt the old style being caught up in a knot at the back. Some males cut the hair short with the exception of a single lock at the back, which is called u sinkhoway or u sinkh-' kwairi (i.e. the grandmother's lock.) The forepart of the head is often shaven. It is quite the exception to see a beard, although the moustache is not infrequently worn. The Lyngngams pull out the hairs of the moustache with the exception of a few hairs on either side of the upper lip.

PHYSICAL AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The Khasis are usually short in stature, with bodies well nourished, and the males are extremely muscular. The trunk is long in proportion to the rest of the body, and broad at the waist; calves are very highly developed. The women when

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

women at Nongstoin wearing gaiters of leaves. It was explained to me that these were worn to keep off the leeches. The Khasi women might almost be said to be excessively clothed—they wear the cloak in such a way as to hide entirely the graceful contours of the figure. The women are infinitely more decently clothed than Bengali coolie women, for instance; but their dress cannot be described as becoming or graceful, although they show taste as regards the blending of colours in their different garments.

The dress of the Syntong women is a little different. With them the *jain khrywong* takes the place of the Khasi *jainsem*, and is worn by them in the following manner:—One of the two ends is passed under one armpit and its two corners are knotted on the opposite shoulder. The other end is then wound round the body and fastened at the waist, from which it hangs half way down the calf. Over this they wear a sort of apron, generally of muga silk. They have the cloak and the head-wrapper just the same as the Khasi women. The Syntong striped cloth may be observed in the picture of the Syntong girl in the plate. Khasi women on festive occasions, such as the annual Nongkrem puja, do not cover the head. The hair is then decked with jewellery or with flowers; but on all ordinary occasions Khasi women cover the head. *War* women, however, often have their heads uncovered.

Modern Dress.—The up-to-date Khasi male wears knicker-bockers made by a tailor, stockings, and boots; also a tailor-made coat and waistcoat, a collar without a tie, and a cloth peaked cap. The young lady of fashion dons a chemise, also often a short coat of cloth or velvet, stockings, and smart shoes. Of course she wears the *jainsem* and cloak, but occasionally she may be seen without the latter when the weather is warm. It should be mentioned that the Khasi males are seldom seen without a haversack in which betel-nut, lime, and other odds and ends are kept; and the female has her purse, which, however, is not visible, being concealed within the folds of her lower garment. The haversack of the men is of cloth in the high plateau and in the Khasi country, but it is of knitted fibre in the *War* country. The Syntengs have a cloth bag, which they call *ka ramu*.

A. Gurdon 2-4, 5 (56 date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

ing of which the last drop of liquor remains adhering to the spout of the gourd is the name selected for the child. Then the puja performer invokes the god to grant good luck to the child. The father takes the pot containing the placenta, after having previously placed rice flour and fermented rice therein, and waves it three times over the child, and then walks out with it through the main entrance of the house and hangs up the pot to a tree outside the village. When he returns from this duty, before he re-enters the house, another throws water over the father's feet. The father, being thus cleansed, enters, and holds the rice flour to his mouth three times. Two people then, holding the dried fish by their two ends, break them in two. The powdered turmeric mixed with rice flour and water is applied to the right foot of the father, the mother and the child receiving the same treatment. The friends and relations are then anointed, the turmeric being applied, however, to their left feet. The bow, arrows, *da*, and a *star* are carefully placed inside the inner surface of the thatch on the roof, and the ceremony is over. Rice flour is then distributed to all who are present, and the male adults are given liquor to drink. After two or three months the ears of the child are bored and ear-rings are inserted. These ear-rings are called *ki shaukhar rawbei* (i.e. the ear-rings of the great-grandmother). Mr. Jenkins mentions that the naming ceremony amongst the Syntengs is performed by the "oldest aunt," presumably on the mother's side. A basket of eggs is placed in the centre of the room, and before the ceremony begins one egg has to be broken. Then the aunt of the child takes two sticks, and, raising them to her shoulder, lets them fall to the ground. Before they fall she shouts, "What name do you give the child?" The name is mentioned, and if, on falling upon the ground, one stick crosses the other, it is a proof that the name has won the approval of the spirit. If the sticks do not fall in this position, another egg is broken and another name is chosen, and the sticks are dropped as before until they fall in the required position, when it is understood by the performers that the name is a good one. Mr. Jenkins was informed by a young man "who had renounced heathenism" that some of the more cunning women cross the sticks before lifting them, and that

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

be a successful era in store for the people of the State. The goddess on this occasion may be regarded as a Khasi Demeter, although no mysteries form part of her services as at the Grecian Eleusis. The Nongkrem ceremony and dance (now held at Smit) take place in the late spring, generally in the month of May. A lucky day having been fixed, the Siem sends a ring of cane (*kyrwoh*) by way of a summons to the people of every village in the State, at the same time informing them of the date of the puja, and requesting them to attend with their offerings, consisting of goats and different articles of food. In the meantime various pujas have been taking place in the house of *Ka Siem Sad*, the Siem priestess, which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The more interesting points only will be mentioned. A fortnight before the puja and dance at Smit the *sah-blei*, or high priest, pours out libations of liquor in the *kyrsiu-diang*, or place where the sacrificial goats are kept, and in front of the great post (*ot diang ensing*, or Khasi oak), in the house of the Siem priestess. Dancing then takes place in front of the post. Later on the Siem, with the high priest and other attendant priests, walks with extremely slow gait to a small hill where a stone altar has been prepared, and sacrifices a cock in honour of *u'lei Shillong*, or the god of the Shillong Peak. A silver dish with powdered rice, liquor in a gourd (*ka'iad um*), betel-nut, and some leaves of the Khasi oak (*diang ensing*) are also necessary adjuncts of the puja. A goat is then sacrificed, and the sacrifice is followed by a dance of twenty-two men armed with swords and shields and chowries (fly-flaps). Having danced before the altar, the party returns to the house of the Siem priestess and executes another dance in the great courtyard. The Siem and certain selected persons dance in front of the *rishot blei*, or holy post of Khasi oak inside the house of the Siem priestess, the dancers being entertained with dried fish and ginger. Then follows the great dance of girls and men in front of her house. The girls dance in the centre, taking such tiny steps, that the lifting of their feet from the ground is hardly perceptible, the arms held down to the sides and the eyes demurely downcast. It is on this occasion that they wear the peculiar silver (and sometimes gold) crowns illustrated in the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

plate. The hair is worn tied in a knot behind the head, but with a long tail hanging down the back. Rich silk cloths are worn by the girls, who present the appearance of being, if anything, overclothed, or, as Yule aptly puts it, of "perfect parallelograms." They wear a profusion of gold and coral bead ornaments, silver and gold chains, bracelets, ear-rings of gold, and any other jewellery they can lay hands on. Not only is the wife of the family jewellery requisitioned by the fair *dilettanti* (it is only the unmarried girls who dance), but she borrows from her friends. The men dance round the outside of the circle waving fly-flaps and prancing (often nowadays wearing long boots) with ungainly strides. The music necessary for the dance consists of *tangmeri* (pipes), drums, and cymbals. This is *ka shad kyntiei*, or the dance of the women. Then there is *ka shad mantiah*, or the dance of the men, who are gaily dressed, wearing plumes of black and white cock's feathers (*u thngh*) and hold swords and shields. After gyrating for some time, two men at a time rapidly approach one another and clash their swords together in mock combat. They then retire, or, after again revolving for a period, repeat the process; then other couples follow and take their place. This goes on until the dancers get tired or are told to stop.

The same description may be taken as applicable to all the Khasi dances. Dancing forms part of the ceremony of placing the ashes in the sepulchre of the clan. Dancing also forms a part of certain ceremonies performed at markets for the prosperity of the State and for the good of trade.

When I was at Mawsynram, at the time of the appointment of a Sia, I witnessed a very pretty dance called *ka shad kynmaw*, performed by men who held in their hands branches of trees in their hands. This is most effective. Then followed a dance of some forty young girls, very well dressed, covered with the usual gold and coral beads and silver chains, and wearing the silver crown, or *pawnpiat*. The young women danced with great spirit, and with an absence of all shyness, but still with the greatest decorum. Many of the women, spectators as well as dancers, were observed to be without the usual *tep mok blah*, or head-cloth, the absence of which is always a sign amongst the Khasi women of merry-making. There were

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

considering. Some of the leading characteristics of the Lyngams will now be detailed. The Lyngams are by complexion swarthy, with features of Mongolian type. The men are of middle height and the women remarkably short, both sexes being not nearly so robust as the Khasis, a result due probably to climatic influences, for the Lyngams live in fever-haunted jungles. The men have very little hair about the face, although a scanty moustache is sometimes seen, the hairs in the centre being carefully plucked out, the result being two tufts on either side. Beards are never seen. The women are ill-favoured, and wear very little clothing. The men wear the sleeveless coat of the Khasi and Mikir pattern, called *phong-mawng*, which is made of cotton dyed red, blue, and white. This custom may have been borrowed from the Khasis. They do not grow their own cotton, but obtain it from the plains. They make their own dyes, *shonglong* (red) and *kar sai-ong* (black). A cotton cloth, barely enough for purposes of decency, is tied between the legs, the ends being allowed to hang down in front and behind. Sometimes an apron is worn in front. At the present day the men wear knitted woollen caps, generally black or red, of the Nongstoin pattern (a sort of fisherman's cap), but the elderly men and head-men wear turbans. The females wear a cotton cloth about eighteen inches broad round the loins, sometimes striped red and blue, but more often only dark blue. A blue or red cloth is thrown loosely across the shoulders by unmarried girls, but married women only wear the waist-cloth, like the Garos. A cloth is tied round the head by married women, sometimes, Garo fashion. The women wear quantities of blue beads as necklaces, like their Garo sisters. They obtain the beads from the Garo markets at the foot of the hills. Brass ear-rings are worn by both sexes; the women, like the Garos, load their ears to such an extent with brass rings as to distend the holes greatly. Silver armlets are worn by the head-men only, or by those who possess the means to give a great feast to the villagers. This is the custom of the Garo *nokmas*, or head-men. Both sexes wear bracelets. The men also wear necklaces of beads. The rich wear necklaces of cornelian and another stone which is thought by the Lyngams to be valuable. A necklace of such stones is called *u'piring khi* (god's necklace).

The spectators now go to the side, the S'iem and the Rangbahs come down to the place of sacrifice, while the Sob Blei receives the wreath and the sacrificial gifts and spreads them out in order on the ground. Then he takes the rooster in both hands and calls on the god Shillong with these words: "O god Shillong, thou who hast been wated since time immemorial! (ko Blei Shillong kumba la buh u long ïhwa!)" With a deep bow he then offers the sacrifice five times. Rooster and goat are sprinkled with water, rice, and the flour from apu and ryni, and are then beheaded. Then the examination of the entrails (dyihot) takes place in order to see if the sacrifice was acceptable. The way of doing that will be given below.

After the end of the sacrifice the Sob Blei and a flute player lead the sword dance, after them the S'iem and the other dancers follow in turn. Various drums are beaten alternately and flutes are played through the whole night. When night falls the goats of the S'iem and those of the various districts of the kingdom of Nongkrem are brought for the sacrifice of the next day.

The day following the great market is called ka ngi Lyngka. It is the center point and climax of the whole ceremony. From early in the morning the crowds pour in from all sides of the Khasi Mountains.

Early in the morning an unmarried girl of the royal lineage (ka S'iem ha dang khynraw) dances in the house of the S'iem sïad before the ridbor Blei. Usually a granddaughter or nearer relative of the S'iem sïad is chosen for this. Two men then take the girl in their arms and carry her with a rocking motion to the large open place in front of the ïing sïad.

Then the great folk dance begins. In the middle of the place musicians squat on the ground and play the drums and flutes, and strike the cymbals. The music is quite without art, only a repetition of the same [illegible].

The women dancers move in a rather narrow circle around the musicians. Only the unmarried girls dance. The clothes they wear for it are very rich and frequently very valuable. Fine cloths, usually of red, yellow, or blue silk are draped over their bodies; the upper body and arms are covered by a satin jacket. Their hair is bound together in a bun behind their heads; a string hangs /facing p. 896. Fig. 5 Khasi Men Dancers in front of the ïing sïad. Phot. P. From. Stegmüller, S. D. S. Fig. 6. Sword Dance of the Khasi. Fig. 7. S'iem sïad and S'iem of Nongkrem. / /897/ down from the bun which usually ends in three tassels. The head is covered by a golden or silver crown of fine chased work, which is topped by a bunch of feathers or a bunch of artificial flowers. Around their necks they wear chains of gold or

[illegible]

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

JOURNAL

OF THE

ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

Vol. LXXIII. Part III.—ANTHROPOLOGY AND COGNATE SUBJECTS.

No. 4.—1904.

Notes on the Khasis, Syntengs, and allied Tribes, inhabiting the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District in Assam.—By MAJOR P. R. T. GURDON, *Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam.* (With plates III—IV).

[Read 3rd August, 1904.]

1. *Physical characteristics.*—The men are seldom tall; they are generally well made, and possess great strength of limb,—of leg in particular. Their features show a resemblance to those of the Japanese; their complexions are fair, noses flat, lips thick, and eyes very frequently obliquely set. The women are good-looking, of a buxom type, and are cheerful and pleasant-mannered. Children are sometimes exceedingly pretty. Khasis are inveterate chewers of *pán*,—both men, women, and children; the distances from place to place being measured by the number of betel-nuts that can be chewed on the journey. The hair of the males is shaved above the forehead pretty high up, and the remainder is gathered into a knot at the back of the head. Very few Khasis have much hair about the face. Both Khasis and Syntengs wear the sleeveless coat (*jymphong*) loin-cloth, *jain sliang* (a kind of

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi
Garo AR5

142
291
• 302
516
854

C. Inter-relations at Emangpot village

D. Preparation of dowries (funeral silver) at Nongbagpot

142
291
302
342
516
964

[K 80-0]

17: Banerjee E-5 (955) 1962 ART Khasi ART
Small

796 182 769 231

The goats were sacrificed y his sister's eldest son (*Sawa-kharnah*) and in charge of respective units a the open courtyard. The priests evoked the ancestors and ancestress and lled upon them by some praying "Oh God and Goddess, I offer this sacrifice s our ancestors did. Bless the Siems, his family and the people of his state. shall beseech you again on this day after one year. You create favourable nother by virtue of your power, bring clouds and rains to yield bumper cr to and ensure a happy and prosperous life."

On the last day (Nongkr a man of Mawroh clan sacrificed a pig introducing an iron spike in th sixth stomach. Nine pieces of meat from different parts of the pig's body were again offered to their five ancestors. The *Siem* in the presence of his *Durbar* performed the last item of festival by praying to U Shiliong, when the Chief V Rymph clan also followed in the same way for seeking the blessings of their land deity.

This brought the ritual to be end performed at the residence of *Siem*. The five pieces of goat's and pig meat offered to their five ancestors, were then handed over to the in-charg of the five units considered as somewhat higher in their State organization. buy distributed them as a suitable piece in their unit, making a feast as a sor of public declaration of the completion of their greatest festival for the year.

Dancing

535 796 [533]

Besides the ritual describe above, dance with the accompaniment of music formed an important aspect v this festival. A dance known as *nongkynkah* had been a regular feature for four days, namely, third and fifth day. This dance has some interesting features It has to be performed in pairs. The first pair was constituted by Chief and the Chief's maternal uncle. Second to fifth pairs were formed by any two persons from the audience. The subsequent pairs were to the gathering. They danced only after having first before the Oak pillar (*Ri* with those in front on the fifth day. This paving was then not adhered to on ce ceremony of the last rite of the festival.

A second type of dance (*ja* and *mastieh*) was then performed in the courtyard by the musicians as well as by the traditional dancers (*nongshad*) with drums and dry leaves in the s manner of one round up. The dance was always held in pairs first by musicians, and then dancers, who danced their traditional dress consisting of silk turb (*shompung*) simmered with feathers, coloured sleeveless coat (*lymphong*) hair chains and coral necklaces. Later on they joined the procession, that w on to the adjacent hill where after the completion of the ceremony of goat killi s, a *ja* and *mastieh* was performed by the residence of *Siem* ultimately.

[291] [301]

This dance (*nongkhnjor*) was performed by the Siems family. It was held early in the morning of the fourth day in the central hall (*Shlur*) and also in the courtyard. The men put on their normal dress whereas the women dressed themselves with gold and silver ornaments (*pansngiat*), numerous silver ornaments and different coloured tissues. They dressed and braided the hairs into a knot just at the nape. The High Priestess who also danced with the members of the Siems' family, stood in the middle of the line and chief musician stood at one end. They held each other in hand and danced round the fire-place of the central hall (*Shlur*) in anti-clock-wise direction in accompaniment of music. The people assembled there, gave vent to their feeling in their customary way every time, before they resumed to make it three times. Similar performance of dances were also held in the courtyard.

[291] [301] [302]

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

144 *Characteristics.*—In order to determine the ethnological position of the Khásis, we need dwell upon a few only of their physical characteristics, viz. those which are held to indicate that type of the human family, the Mongolian, to which they undoubtedly belong. A detailed description of their physiognomy would embrace forms and characters by no means common even to tribes occupying the hills in close proximity to them, much less referable to all branches of the Mongolian stock. These differences in detail, which may be attributed mainly to local influences, render it extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to trace out the exact relation which these mountain tribes bear to each other. But the Mongolian, or to use a more comprehensive term, the Turanian, physiognomy is unmistakable in them all—Khásis, Jaintias, Garos, Mikirs, Kúkis, Manipuris, etc. The chief points may be briefly stated as follows :—

142 Colour sooty or yellow, though a darker hue is not entirely
[141] unknown; nose somewhat depressed, with a peculiar conformation
[302] towards the forehead at the glabellum, which is very flat and broad; face broad, flat, and squarish, with high and rounded cheek-bones; skull globular rather than square; eyes middle-sized and black, with a yellow tinge in the eyeball; eyelids obliquely set, but less acutely than in the Chinese and other Indo-Chinese races; mouth large, with prominent though not very thick lips; hair black, thick, and worn long, the orthodox style being to tie it up in a knot at the back, varying little with sex; beard remarkably sparse, but the
141 moustache more abundant than the beard. The lower classes go
[824] bare-headed; stature low in the majority of cases; constitution strong and robust; limbs thick, short, and stout; trunk long in proportion and very broad at the waist; calves over-developed, but this is considered an element of beauty, more especially in the women, who, on the contrary, are fine and handsome [illegible] man; carriage ungraceful.

157 *Social and Moral Qualities.*—Disposition very affable, genial, and cheerful; rather industrious, but devoid of ingenuity and mechanical skill. In the industrial arts, such as masonry, carpentry, and agriculture, they are amenable to training. Dress amongst the
291 lower classes is confined to a fringed jacket rudely woven of hemp, extending down as far as the thighs, and leaving the arms bare, together with a scanty covering for the loins. The more respectable classes wear a turban of coarse cotton or silk for a head-dress, and a sheet of silk thrown loosely over the shoulders, together with a long